

## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

November 10, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of End Times

First Lesson: [1 Kings 17:8-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 115A CW

Second Lesson: [2 Corinthians 8:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 12:38-44](#)

### **LIVE LIKE YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER** **Live a Life of Startling Generosity** **GENEROSITY EXAMINED**

1. Many are generous to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. God sees not \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. God loves \_\_\_\_\_ flowing from \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is about Jesus being \_\_\_\_\_ toward you.

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

One of the activity books some of my kids love to do are seek and find books, like [1001 Things to Find](#). You can also think about the [Where's Waldo?](#) books. You can stare and look and try to find things. Have you ever noticed though in life if you don't know what to look for if you are trying to find something, you don't see it until someone really points it out to you?

I'm going to use one example here to see if you can see this one. We are going to see a bunch of these in the next few weeks as Christmas approaches, a nativity scene. It seems pretty normal. It might be a little blurry/far away/small, but did anyone notice? Do you see Yoda in there? He blends in, right? If no one would have told you anything, you'd think it was just a normal manger scene, but there is Yoda in the middle of a manger scene. It doesn't belong there but once it's been pointed out to you that it's there and then you see it.



I'll show one other thing. This is when my wife and I came back from China. We had to buy a car. This is the first car I bought off of a lot, so I was super nervous. I hadn't been in the states for very long and my father-in-law came along. I never negotiated with a salesman before. Did you ever notice though when once you buy a car (this is our car)



that all of a sudden you start seeing that car everywhere? The color of that car, the make and model of that car, and before you never noticed them and then you're like, "Oh man! Everyone has this car!" It's just that you weren't looking for it before. Until it is pointed out or you are thinking about it, you don't see it. You don't notice it.

This is really what is happening in our text today. As Jesus is looking at generosity and looking at the people of the day, He is going to have them look at the people around. To be honest, the disciples and the people of the day would not have understood what He was talking about when it comes to generosity. But Jesus is really going to **examine generosity**. He is going to examine what the teachers of the Law were focused on and then later He is going to point out to them someone that no one else was looking at, no one else would notice, and why her fate, why what she did was important. Everyone else would overlook it, but when Jesus points it out, you can't help but look at it. And then for us, to examine what He is talking about and apply it to ourselves. Once you hear it and you think about the contrast between these teachers of the Law and us, you have to notice and look at it in your lives and the lives of other Christians. Then what it really means for us to be rich and why we can be generous is something we'll see as well.

Jesus begins our section as He is teaching them, as He always did, and then He begins to talk about the teachers of the Law. He says, ***"Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."*** You can picture them, the people that were wearing the nicest clothes and they were the religious leaders of the day. It talks about how they had the prominent places and they did all the things to make sure that people noticed them. They had the lengthy prayers. So Jesus points them out and says "You notice them. They want to be noticed." But what should we really notice about them?

As we are talking about generosity, what were they generous about? What are many people generous about? These teachers of the law and *many are generous to self and to outward appearance*. Do you agree that is what many people do, that they are focused on themselves and many people are generous to self and outward appearance? God wants us to be generous but what do we like to be generous to? We say "I have to get mine first." This is what the teachers of the Law were so concerned about, the fine

clothing, the nicest places, how they looked, how other people saw them, what their reputation was. Is this something that our world is filled with? If it's not social media and your appearance, it's what car you drive, what your house looks like, what job you have, what clothes you wear. It's all about appearance. It's all about how we make ourselves look and maybe keeping up with the Jones', needing the newest, the best things. We used to talk about the newest iPhones, but now they are all over the place. The new phones are everywhere, as well as the newest technology. It's not wrong to have things. It's not wrong to be wealthy or to look nice or to have things, but the question is what are you being generous to? Have you put yourself and your appearance before everything else?

Jesus speaks about one of the biggest problems. We are going to talk about the widows in just a second, but it says what they do. ***"They devour widows' houses..."*** You might not understand exactly what that means in the context, but it sounds bad to devour widows' houses. Widows were, in some ways, kind of a step lower than beggars. At this time, it was harder for women to work and make their own living, so younger widows were often encouraged to marry again. Older widows would usually be brought in by kids or other people to help be taken care of. But often life was extremely hard for widows. For these people, they were often overlooked. We see in the New Testament where the Christian church gave and supported widows. It was a great way to support those in need. That's what Stephen and the disciples were focused on, but what were these teachers of the Law focused on?—devouring their houses, abusing the poor, not being generous to others but being generous to self. You can tell that this is a huge sin, a huge problem, when we are so focused on self and not generous to God and to others, so Jesus says this: ***"These men will be punished most severely."*** It's a great thing for us to examine. What is our priority? What are we generous to? Is your first thought *me and what I get and my appearances?* Or is it something else?

We see the other way of approaching this when we see Jesus point to the widow. It says: ***Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."*** What was Jesus focusing on? What is God focused on?—not how much is given. There were many other people who gave tons of money but this poor woman gives two coins. *God sees not how much but how and why?* This woman gave out of her poverty to support God and the work of the Gospel.

This was not a huge gift, but for her it was. But it was all about the why and the how. We see that she did this trusting God—trusting that even if she had very little. It says that she had only a few cents. You could say that she was penniless even before she

gave. Now she is literally penniless, but she gave out of faith and trusting God that He can and will provide. So what do we know? We know that God is concerned about the how and the why. It's not how much.

I heard an example of this, a story. A few weeks ago I heard it again. I was researching and preparing for the sermon. It was a story about a person who visited another church. They were visiting another place, so you don't have your offering all prepared. In his wallet he had a \$5 bill and a \$100 bill. The offering plate comes around quick and he throws in a bill. At the end of the service he was like, "Oh, which one did I throw in there?" He looks in his wallet and the \$5 bill is in there. "Ah, I meant to put in that \$5 instead of the \$100," so what did he do? He goes up and talks to the usher and says "I know this is kind of embarrassing. I know this is kind of weird, but I meant to put in a \$5 bill and I put in a \$100 bill. Can you give me that?" The usher said "I don't really feel good about that. I don't want to take money out but you can take that out if you want." The guy thought about it a little bit more and said, "I can't do it. God will just have to take my \$100 gift today. He'll accept that and be happy with my \$100 gift." The usher says, "Not really. He'll accept your gift that was meant for \$5." He gave \$100 but what did he want to give in his heart? He wanted to give \$5. I think it's a fascinating look at what our desire is and that God is more concerned about what we want to give, what is the desire in our hearts, instead of what we actually give.

So what does God smile upon? What does God love? *God loves generosity flowing from faith.* It's an understanding that *I might not have enough.* Times are hard. Notice in every one of the texts that we looked at, it was not about people who had so much and gave so much. It was about people in poverty. People that didn't have much but gave; gave out of trusting God that He can and will provide. He'll help them and they can give to God and support others in their time of need, even when it hurts. It's all about faith. It's all about trusting that it's not all in your control. Yes, you can plan and say "I need this. I need that," but often things happen different than you imagine. But God is there. He is going to provide. If it's a question of, "Do we have enough money to have kids or get married?" "Can I give to God with this or that?" It's not saying you have to give everything.

That's one of the questions here. Is the widow here an example for what YOU must do? That you must give EVERYTHING to God? She had two coins and she gave everything. Is that what God asks you to do, to give all your wealth, to come here next Sunday and give your whole paycheck, everything to God? No. It's to give out of faith and to give in ways that sometimes it hurts, which doesn't mean it's all about money. Maybe it's time. Maybe it's your gifts and experience—to understand that God has given you ALL things.

That's a big part of this picture—to understand that your money isn't your money. It's God's. Your time, your gifts, your talents, is it yours or is it something that God has given you? If I understand that, that all of these things are gifts from Him, then I can give back to Him. Also, it's an important thing to understand that sometimes we'll say "I don't have anything to give." Maybe that is an idea of money. "I don't have enough to give right now." Well, anything you give then is seen as an act of faith. Or you might say "I don't have any gifts to give to the church. I don't have any talents." Did God give you gifts and talents to serve here and to serve your family? Has God given you a purpose and meaning in life, to be a blessing to others? Yes! Sometimes that's to look and say "I can serve. I can help. I can give to God and to others even when it's hard, even when I don't think I have anything to give" and not look down on what God has given you but to give in faith.

Why can we give in faith? Why can we be like a widow who is willing to give all, to be like Macedonians who gave out of poverty? Because we see what God has done for us. We see that in 2 Corinthians as it speaks about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Grace is about Jesus being rich toward you.* We don't earn anything. Our giving is not a way for God to say "Okay, now you get to go into heaven" or "You've done enough." God is not a vending machine that if I put in a few things I can now say "God, give me this. I served you. I gave money. Now in exchange, you should give me what I want." That's not how it works. He's not that cosmic vending machine. He is a God who has given us everything!

How? It says: ***For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*** Jesus had everything! He is God and He left heaven. He left paradise to become a man who had no home. He was a lowly carpenter. He went and taught and healed people. He gave of His time. He was always teaching and with people, generously giving all things, and then finally giving EVERYTHING as He lived faithfully and went to the cross to pay for your sins. He became sin for you and for me, to take on that debt and erase that debt so that you are now rich—rich spiritually in all that you need. To know that you have been forgiven, that you have peace, and most of all, you have heaven in store; to live a life knowing you are going to live forever. To live a life knowing that the things God has given you are good and necessary for this world, but they are also temporary and to know that they are not everything. Yes, God gives us so many blessings, but in comparison to the riches of forgiveness and eternal life, a true peace when we lose everything, when there is sadness and things that we can't fix, God can. God can give that true healing and peace through Christ.

So we examine. It's the thing that each of us has to look at. There is no command on how much for you to give. There is no command on this much money or this much

time. It's for you to examine and be a cheerful giver. Why? It's because God has given you everything. Christ sacrificed and died for you to give you forgiveness of sins and peace and life everlasting. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.